

CANADA AND AFGHANISTAN: PEACEMAKING AS COUNTER-
INSURGENCY WARFARE; A STUDY IN POLITICAL RHETORIC

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This essay examines the political rhetoric used by Canadian politicians and others to support Canada's military involvement in the war in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2011. It exposes the contradictions and flaws in these arguments by examining how the terms peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding have played out in public discourse. This case study of the Afghanistan war explores how political rhetoric works to change national identity and what barriers this rhetoric has faced in making fundamental changes to public attitudes formed in earlier years.

The conflict in Afghanistan will be far more costly and much, much longer than Americans realize. This war, already in its seventh year, will eventually become the longest in American history.¹

—Richard Holbrooke in 2008, US Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan appointed by President Obama

A BRIEF HISTORY

If the Afghanistan War (2001-) will indeed be America's longest war, surpassing even the Vietnam War (1960-1975), then Canada's involvement in the Afghanistan conflict will also be Canada's longest war. Canadian soldiers have been fighting in Afghanistan since December 2001 and the withdrawal from Canada's combat role, approved by Parliament in March 2008 for July 2011, has evolved into a "non-combat" role lasting until 2014.² This is a total of thirteen years, longer than Canada's involvement in World War One and World War Two combined. Although deaths have been limited during